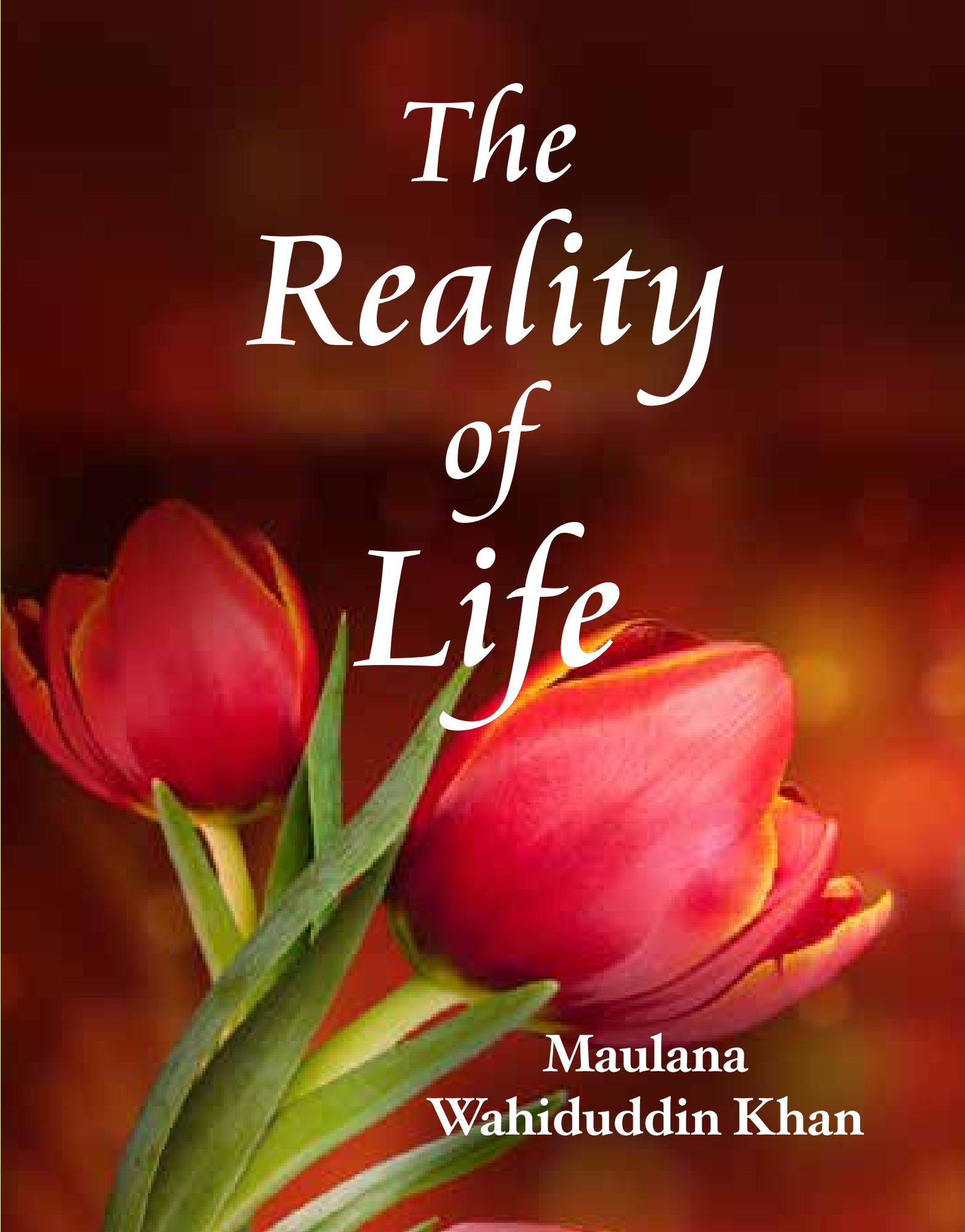
The Reality of Life



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The Creation Plan of God

A western philosopher has written that it appears that man is a stranger in this vast universe. It seems that neither has man been made for this world, nor has this world been made for man. Both seem mismatched.

Man is born with unlimited potential, yet in the present world he finds only a very limited use for it. According to his nature, man wants to live eternally, but very soon, without his leave, death arrives and puts an end to his life. He harbours an ocean of desires in his heart, but these desires are never fulfilled. He houses a life of dreams in his mind, but these dreams are never realized. In this case, there is no difference between a poor man and a rich man. Why are man and the present world so mismatched? We can find our answer if we understand God's Creation Plan.

The reality is that God—the Creator of man, has created man according to His Plan. To become acquainted with this Plan it is necessary for a man

to have a thorough understanding of himself—just as the workings of a machine can only be understood when we study the drawings of the engineer who made it. Besides the mind of the engineer, there is no other thing that can clarify what the machine is meant for. The case of man is the same.

The existence of man is such a unique phenomenon that no other such example can be found throughout the vastness of the cosmos. Man is rightly called the 'best of all creations,' which means the best and most meaningful 'being' among all the things created. Such a 'meaningful being' cannot have been created without a purpose. The Creator of man has created him according to a special Plan. His intention being that man must spend a period of trial in this present, imperfect world and subsequent to this, according to his deeds, he will earn the right to inhabit the perfect and eternal world, another name for which is Paradise.

The Creator of the world has created this world,

as one half of a pair—the present world, in which we pass our lives after birth, is the first half; and the next eternal world where we live after death is the other half. The Creator of man has thus created him as an eternal creature and has divided his life into two stages—the *pre-death period* or the life in this world and the *post death period* or the life after death. The limited period before death is meant to be a test for man, while the period after his death will be the period for his reward or punishment, based on his performance in the test in this life. This is the scheme of existence for this world as devised by its Creator. The real aim of creation is to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise.

What is Paradise?

Paradise is the name of the ideal world; the desire for which is lodged in the hearts of every man and woman. It is Paradise where the personality of man shall achieve fulfillment in the fullest sense.

Man desires this Paradise with every fibre of his being and Paradise in all its entirety awaits him.

Paradise is that world, where a creation such as man attains his complete fulfillment, where he thinks the way he wants to think; where he sees what he desires to see; where he listens to the sounds that give pleasure to his ears in the real sense; where he touches those things which gives him the highest degree of pleasure; where he has the company of those people who make his life highly meaningful, where the winds are life-giving zephyrs for him, where he eats such food as he eternally craved for and he sips such drinks as are only beautiful figments of his imagination today.

How do we Qualify for Paradise?

In the present world of trial, any man or woman to be eligible for Paradise, needs to have two qualifications: one is to acknowledge truth and the other is to lead a principled life. Those men and women who qualify in this test will be given

a place in Paradise—where all their desires will be fulfilled. For those who fail in this test, they shall spend their lives in a state of eternal deprivation.

In the present world, man finds himself totally free. However, this freedom does not belong to him as a matter of right, but is rather a test paper. What man has to do is to acknowledge the truth of One God, and surrender to Him—not by compulsion but by his own choice. This surrendering before the truth of One God is without doubt the greatest sacrifice that any man can make. Acknowledging the truth of One God is, like making oneself smaller not only to God but to others as well. But this is the very virtue, which will raise man to the highest position. It will take him to the very entrance of Paradise. The second important thing in this set of requirements is to lead a principled life. Generally man's character is moulded by his emotions—anger, revenge, jealousy, hatred, rivalry, etc. These are the negative feelings that shape man's personality. But man has to become

disciplined in such matters. He should not build his character under the influence of external incentives, but by his own decisions: he should establish it on the basis of higher principles. This is what is called Divine character.

The Right Approach to the Creation Plan

According to this Creation Plan of God, human beings are placed in situations where they have to face hardships from time to time throughout their lives as part of their test. Difficulty and sadness are integral part of the creation plan of the Creator. No man has the power to extricate himself from this life of trial and tribulation. This arrangement is to remind man of the fact that the present world has not been made as a place of luxury and comfort, but rather as a period of trial and as such as will help determine whether he is eligible or not for the eternal life in Paradise.

In spite of tremendous development in the present world, adverse conditions are still very much in evidence. But people, owing to their

lack of awareness of God's creation plan, do not understand why this is prevalent. So, they continue to react negatively to situations and by giving such a response, prove themselves—in the eyes of God—to be failures in the examination he has set for them. Stress is also a major problem faced by people everywhere. Many institutions have been established which claim to be able to eliminate stress. What these institutions actually do, in their endeavour to de-stress people is to ask them to stop their thinking process, thus bringing on them a kind of temporary anaesthesia. This is, however, not a real solution to the problem of stress. There is only one true solution to this problem and that is to adopt the correct attitude to stress—that of managing stress instead of trying to eliminate it or react negatively to it and thus pass our test. Unpleasantness has been put into this world for man to learn the right lessons from it. The true lesson taught by unpleasant experiences is that man remembers the next world of Paradise.

Seen in the light of this creation plan, the root of

all human problems is that the unenlightened want to make their Paradise in this world prior to death, whereas under the natural laws, the situation here on earth makes this impossible. According to God's creation plan, man has to be content in this world before death, so that he may be sure that in the world after death he has Paradise in store for him. The right and proper thing for man to do is therefore to acknowledge and accept this law of creation, and plan his life accordingly. His sole aim in this present world should be to make himself acceptable in the eyes of God, so that he may be held eligible for admission into Paradise in the eternal world after death. A successful person is one who has realized the eternal world in this temporary world; who has discovered in the failures of the present world, the secret to eternal success in the next eternal world.

The Most Important Issue

If a group of people were asked, 'What was the most important issue for mankind today?' different

people would have different answers. Some would say that the spread of nuclear weapons was the most important issue. Some would say population explosion, while others might say that the production and distribution of wealth were of paramount importance. Such diversity of opinions shows that people in general do not properly recognize themselves. If they did, they would all agree that the most critical issue facing mankind was man's disregard of the reality of his existence.

Man persists in ignoring the inescapable fact that one day he must die and be called to account before his Maker. If he were to become aware of the reality of his existence, it would be to the afterlife rather than to this world that he would direct his attention. If you stand at a busy crossroads during the evening rush-hour and observe what people are hurrying towards, you will realize what today's human-being has chosen as his fundamental issue. Why do you think there is an endless stream of traffic in the streets? Why has the merchant decorated his shop? Where are

the crowds of people coming from and going to? What is the main topic of people's conversation and the true purpose of their meeting one another? What interests them the most? To what use are their finest talents and resources put? What have people taken with them; from their homes, and what do they intend to return with? If you can answer these questions, you will also be able to deduce exactly what it is that mankind has chosen to base his life on and what he is endeavouring to achieve.

It is plain for all to see that today's human being is simply running after the satisfaction of his own desires. It is the world rather than the afterlife that he is eager to obtain. His happiness hinges on the fulfilment of his worldly ambitions, while his grief stems from the fact that this seemingly eludes him. The everyday concept of success is the immediate acquisition of commodities, the enjoyment of leisure and popular acclaim; while failure, to him means to be deprived of these things. This is what the whole of humanity is chasing. No one cares

about tomorrow; everyone becomes frantic about getting his share now, today, this very minute.

This state of affairs is prevalent not only in our big cities but even in the tiniest human settlements; wherever one goes, people seem to be similarly obsessed. Male and female, rich and poor, old and young, urbane and rustic, even the religious and irreligious all are running in this same direction. Man is even ready to sacrifice his faith and his conscience for them at the altar of worldly gain. His struggle is for worldly ends alone, and he cares not what this struggle entails. Every success gained in this way, however, is trivial and mundane and will be of no avail in the afterlife. He who is concerned with the consolidation of his worldly position at the expense of the afterlife is like the young man who does not care to save up for his old age. Eventually the time comes when his limbs fail him and he becomes unfit for further toil. Suddenly he realizes his predicament: he is no longer able to provide for himself. The same applies to our afterlife. All of us are too concerned

with the consolidation of our present positions. No one gives a thought to tomorrow. Though we witness with our own eyes the death of people all around us, we are still not galvanized into action. When the air-raid siren sounds in wartime and proclaims in its chilling wail: 'Squadrons of enemy bombers are approaching to blast this city to eternity. To the air-raid shelters at once!' everyone immediately takes the quickest route to the shelters and in an instant, the busiest of streets are deserted. Anyone who does not react in this manner is considered insane.

There is another danger, however, even more terrible and inevitable, concerning which the Lord of the worlds has given us due warning, which we do not even give a second thought to. What is this warning? It is the warning of the Lord of the worlds. He proclaims His imperatives through His prophets to mankind, 'Worship Me, fulfil your obligations to one another and live in accordance with My will. I will punish those who fail to do this in a way that cannot be imagined.' Although,

every ear has heard this declaration and every tongue acknowledges it in one form or the other, but the general attitude is to treat it as a matter of 'no consequence.' In order to avail themselves of worldly advantages, people perpetrate every form of misdemeanour.

However when it comes to the advantages of the afterlife, they are not concerned enough to take appropriate action. In this way, life's caravan proceeds heedlessly towards a point of no return. People start in response to the siren-screeching out from the military headquarters, but no importance is attached to the danger signal that the Lord of the Universe has given out for mankind. Far from hastening at the sound of it, no one even alters his pace.

What can be the reason for this sorry state of affairs? It is simply that the danger about which the military headquarters' siren warns us is of this world and is observable by us. So, everyone perceives this and knows that its effects will be immediately felt. On the other hand, the danger

that God has cautioned us about will be felt only in the afterlife: the wall of death stands between us and its realization and our eyes cannot penetrate it. Therefore, although people immediately respond to the air-raid siren, they remain unaffected and dispassionate on hearing of the calamity of which God has given us ample warning. The news does not impress upon them the absolute certainty of their doom. This being so, they do not feel spurred on to atone for their sins, or to begin leading righteous lives.

God has given us not only our two eyes with which to perceive the external world, but also a 'third' eye, which can scan the invisible realities that lie beyond the horizons of perception. This 'third' eye is that of our intellect. People remain in a state of doubt because they do not use their intellect. They reckon that reality is what they see through their two eyes, whereas, if they were to ponder over things, they would become even more certain about what remains unseen than about what is visible.

What is the one reality that everybody acknowledges? Death must be the unanimous answer to this question. Death is a reality to which everyone has to reconcile himself with. Everyone realizes that death can overtake one at any time, but whenever the thought of death occurs to people, the things that they think about are of domestic nature like: 'What will happen to my children after I die?' In fact, most of their life is spent in safeguarding their children's future, but no efforts are made to insure their own life ahead. From their attitude, it seems as if only their children will survive them, and that they themselves will be non-existent and so they really have nothing to prepare for. They are totally unaware of the fact that there is a life after death. Whereas the fact of the matter is that, the real life only commences after our death. If people only realized that when they are buried, they are actually being ushered into another world, they would be more worried about themselves rather than about their children's future. This is because

most people, whether religiously or agnostically inclined, are not convinced about the afterlife. Two factors cause one to have doubts about life after death. Firstly, on dying, every human being turns into dust and all traces of his body are effaced. How then can he subsequently be revived? Secondly, the fact that life after death is not visible to us, while the world of today is an observable phenomenon. So if no one has actually seen it, how can we place implicit trust in its advent? Let us look at both these objections in turn.

Life After Death

'When I am dead, will I then be raised up again?' This question is in the back of the minds of even those who do not have any deep convictions of the reality of life after death. The fact however remains that very few people give any direct attention to the question of the afterlife while they are in this world. This is surely an indication of the conscious or subconscious doubt as to its existence. If, however, we give serious thought

to the reality of life after death, it becomes easily comprehensible: God, wishing to put us to the test, has not divulged the secrets of life after death to us directly. He has however spread His signs throughout the universe for us to see and ponder over. This can lead us to a true realization of God and the essence of all things around us. This universe is actually a mirror in which we can gaze upon the image of the next world. Let us understand how.

It is common knowledge that human beings have not always existed in their present state. Man is derived from a formless substance, which gradually takes on the form of a human being as it grows in the mother's womb. This process continues until, in the outside world, it develops into a full-fledged human being. The metamorphosis of an insensate, valueless substance, imperceptible to the naked eye, into a six-foot tall human being, is an everyday event. So why should we have any difficulty in understanding how the minute particles of

our bodies, after being scattered in the ground, will once again take on a human form? In fact, every individual one sees walking around is, an accumulation of countless atoms, previously dispersed in unknown dimensions throughout the earth and atmosphere. Presently the forces of nature brought these atoms together in one meaningful, sensate pattern, so that we are now able to observe these same scattered atoms in the form of a human being—capable of thought, feeling and movement. The very same process will be repeated when, subsequent to our death, our particles are diffused in the air, water and earth. Afterwards, at God's command, they will be reassembled and once again assume the form of a human being. What is so extraordinary about the re-occurrence of an event that has already happened once before?

Even in the world of matter there are indications of the practicability of a repetition of life. Every year, in the rainy season, vegetation flourishes and its greenery spreads in all directions. Then the summer pronounces its death sentence and

the earth dries up. Where flowers bloomed, only a barren plain can be seen. Thus a full-fledged life expires. But when the rains come again, and water pours down from the sky, that very same vegetation is revived and the dry land once again becomes a meadow. In this very same manner, man will be raised to life after his death. Let us look at this from another angle. Doubts occur concerning life after death because our imagination is formulated in terms of our present physical existence. We consider the mobile figure outwardly apparent to us to be the essential human being. We then wonder how this form can be refashioned and raised up again once it has rotted away and mingled with the earth. We observe that when death strikes, an animate human being becomes silent; his motion is halted and all his faculties cease to function. Afterwards he is buried in the ground or cremated depending on the customs of the people concerned. A few days later, the body has been reduced to tiny particles and mingled with the earth in such a way as to be

undetectable to normal vision. We witness daily the extinction of living human beings in this manner and find it difficult to comprehend how a form so totally obliterated can possibly be revived.

The fact is that the word ‘man’ refers, not to any such bodily form, but rather to the ‘soul,’ which inhabits the body. As far as the physical frame is concerned, we know that it is composed of tiny particles called living cells. The position of cells in our body is like that of bricks in a building. The bricks of our physical structure or cells are continuously destroyed in the course of our daily lives and we compensate for this loss by taking in food. Food, once digested, produces various forms of cells, which counter-balance this physical deficiency. In this way, the human body is constantly being eroded and altered. Old cells are destroyed and new ones take their place. This process continues daily until eventually total renovation of the body occurs, usually within a period of ten years. To put it another way, nothing whatsoever remains now of the

body you possessed ten years ago. Your present physique is an entirely new one. If all the parts of your body severed from you over the last ten years were to be gathered together, then another human being—identical to yourself could be constructed. If you are a hundred years old, then ten 'yous' could be formed which, despite their exact similarity to you in appearance, would be no more than inanimate lumps of flesh, for 'you' do not dwell within them. 'You' have abandoned these old bodies and moulded yourself into a new frame. So the saga of construction and destruction is constantly being enacted within 'you' without any evident change occurring. That entity which you call yourself remains as it was. If you had entered into a contract with someone ten years ago, you would continue to admit that 'you' committed yourself in this manner, although your previous frame is now non-existent. Neither the hands, which signed the contract papers, nor the tongue which testified to it, are any longer attached to your body. Nevertheless 'you' still exist, and

'you' acknowledge the fact that this ten-year old contract was your own and continue to abide by it. This is that inward human being at work, which, far from altering with bodily transformation, survives countless physical changes absolutely intact. We can therefore say that the word 'homo sapiens', rather than being a label attached to a certain physical form, which is erased with its death, is a separate entity, which remains intact even after the diffusion of the body's composite parts. The fact that the body alters whereas the soul does not is conclusive proof of the transitional nature of the body and the eternal nature of the soul.

Some misguided people even consider 'life' and 'death' to be the 'accumulation' and the subsequent 'diffusion' of multitudinous particles of matter as expounded by an Urdu poet, Chakbast, in the following words:

Zindagi kya hai, anasir mein zahoor-e-tarteeb
Mauwt kya hai, inhi ajza ka pareshan hona

What is life? Elements arranging themselves in order, and death? Their diffusion.

This, statement is however not borne out by fact. If life were simply ‘elements arranging themselves in order,’ then it follows that it should survive only so long as this orderliness endured, and it should conversely be possible for an expert scientist to create life by an accumulation of these elements; obviously, both these propositions are preposterous. We observe that it is not only those who have been torn limb from limb in some accident, who die. In every condition and at every age people are passing away.

Sometimes perfectly healthy human beings suffer sudden heart failure and die and no doctor can provide an explanation for this. We may regard a corpse as an ‘orderly, elemental manifestation,’ but the soul, which inhabited it, has departed. All elements are arranged in the same order as they were a few minutes beforehand, but they are utterly lifeless. This shows that the organization

of elemental matter does not create life; rather life is an entirely separate entity.

A living human being cannot be produced in a laboratory, though such a physical form can readily be formulated. We have ascertained that the particles that compose a living body consist of normal atoms. The carbon in it is the same as that found in charcoal, its hydrogen and oxygen are the same as that which constitute water, its nitrogen is exactly the same gas as that which accounts for most of the atmosphere, and so on. But is it true to say that a living human being is a specific collection of ordinary atoms that have been arranged in an extraordinary way? Or is it something else besides this? Scientists admit that although we know that the body is fabricated of certain material particles, we are still not in a position to create life just by combining these same particles. This proves that the body of a living human being is not just a conglomerate of inanimate atoms. It is rather a combination of 'life' and 'atoms'. After death, the conglomerate of

‘atoms’ remains visible to us, while ‘life’ departs for another world.

Clearly, ‘life’ is not something, which can be eliminated. When we grasp that life is something with eternal properties, we can appreciate just how rational and natural the ‘life-after-death’ theory is. The facts cry out that life does not consist merely of what can be seen prior to death. Therefore, there must be a life after death also. Our intellect accepts the transient nature of this world, and the fact that man is a being, which survives it. When we die, we do not pass into oblivion, rather we retire to reside in another world.

Understanding this, most people now-a-days do believe in God and in the afterworld. It is not as if they deny these things; however their actions bear no relation to their belief. In practice, all that people are concerned about is ‘worldly success’. Let us understand this with the help of an example: if we were told that the earth’s gravitational pull had ceased to exist and that the planet was being pulled towards the sun at a speed of 6,000 m.p.h.,

can you think what would happen? There would definitely be a total and complete panic in the entire world, as this would imply that within a few weeks all life would be obliterated from the face of the earth.

However, no one realizes that this world is perpetually facing a peril much greater than this. What is this peril? It is the peril of the Last Day in which man will be called to account for his deeds in this world. The Day, which has been destined for the world since the creation of the universe, which we are all careering towards at a reckless speed. As an article of faith, most of us accept this reality, but there are indeed very few who actually feel compelled to give it serious thought and even less who feel the need to prepare for the afterworld.

How Will We Be Judged?

To understand how we will be 'judged', it is important to understand that human actions fall

into one of two categories. The first comprises of matters in which no ‘moral’ choice has to be made. These are purely accidental happenings whose outcome, whether good or bad, cannot be judged from a moral standpoint because they contained no ‘purposeful’ element. The second category is very different in nature because it covers a wide and complex range of actions—the ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of which have to be scrupulously and purposefully considered before being carried out. This is known as the ‘ethical category’.

To understand the difference between the two let us take the example of a stone balanced precariously on the branch of a tree. If you walk under it, it falls and hits you, subsequently you find yourself badly injured. Do you strike the tree and bear a grudge against it? Of course not! But suppose a man picks up a stone, throws it at you with the intention of injuring you and actually does so, won’t you become enraged and feel an urge to retaliate in like manner? You would be perfectly justified in feeling that this wrong should

be ‘punished’ because the act was ‘intentional.’ Here it is a question not just of some random happening, but of right and wrong action, good and bad intentions, in a word, of ‘ethics’.

The examples chosen to clarify this point are of a simple nature in that the outcome of the action is immediately apparent and, moreover, in the second case, it is possible to make an instant moral judgment. But there are other much more complex situations in life where wrongdoing goes undetected, its effects may be hidden or delayed for long periods, and the culprits may never be brought to book either by moral condemnation of society or in a court of law. Sometimes evildoing is, of course, perceived as such, but the miscreant is so clever and resourceful that he is able to escape punishment, or the human resources required to inflict punishment are lacking and so the evildoer goes scot-free. Crimes are often repeated for just such reasons. But the perpetrator of evil should not congratulate himself too soon on the success of his schemes or on his ability to

escape, for it is exactly this type of action that he will be called to account for by his Creator on the Day of Judgment. Everyone, no matter from what walk of life he hails, will be required to stand before his Maker and lay his life absolutely bare before Him. On the basis of the actions which fall into the 'ethical category', where moral precepts or scruples, are of overriding importance, he will either be ushered into Paradise or cast down into the flaming pits of Hell. If all this was kept hidden from him in this world, it was because it was God's plan to put man on 'trial'. If he knew about all this, his trial would have been meaningless.

Every action of man has some consequences for him and every state that he finds himself in precipitates a 'favourable' or 'unfavourable' reaction. He then 'makes' or 'breaks' himself depending upon how he reacts to these situations and the manner in which he employs his faculties. If he reacts 'favourably', he passes the test and if he reacts 'unfavourably', he fails the test.

The afterworld is therefore, the place where man will reap the full consequences of his deeds according to their moral nature. When we think of the afterworld, a few questions arise at this juncture: How can man apprehend the existence of this afterworld and what should he do to prepare for it?

To answer this, let us take the example of sound. For instance, everyone knows that sound is the name of waves that cannot be seen with the naked eye and human voice is the result of the motion of our tongues and larynxes. These sounds and voices form a kind of invisible pattern that is imprinted on the atmosphere. According to scientific theory, any sound or voice uttered by a human being, even thousands of years ago, still exists in waveform, though we do not hear or see these waves. If, however, we possessed the apparatus to detect them, they could be replayed exactly, in their original form, and many would be the historic discussion upon which we could then eavesdrop. Just as we are enveloped by a blanket

of air on which, every sound and word of ours is engraved, even though we neither see the air nor the inscription, so the other world is also enveloping us on all four sides and constantly recording our intentions and designs. Our actions are being imprinted upon its fold and after death; they will be there for all to read. Imagine a record revolving mutely on its turntable. As soon as the needle falls into its groove, the silent disc bursts into music as if it had just been waiting to express the sounds recorded on it. In the same way, a 'record' of all our deeds is being prepared and when the Lord of the Universe utters the word of command, the whole record will be played back to us. On hearing it people will involuntarily say: 'What sort of a book is this which has omitted neither the smallest nor the greatest of matters?' (The Quran 18:49).

The Concept of Accountability

God is indispensable to man. His life is incomplete without God. A philosopher has aptly remarked

that had there been no God, we would have had to invent one. Fortunately, God exists in reality. We can believe in God with conviction, not as a supposition, but as a fact. And we can accord Him the place He deserves in our lives. It is essential that man should have within his reach, a super formula for life's management. God provides just such a formula—a complete principle for life's management.

Human beings are not like machines controlled by a mechanical system, nor are they like animals that are governed by their instincts. Human beings enjoy freedom. They take decisions about their actions of their own free will. Now the question arises as to how to keep man on the right course, how to make him consistently disciplined in his behaviour. History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures in this connection, whether—social pressures, enforcement of the law of the land or the appeals of reformers.

Experience shows that the pressure of society is limited, if not totally ineffective. There are so

many loopholes in the law that it is not difficult for wrongdoers to find a way out. The reformers' bid to reform people are nothing but appeals and appeals alone cannot bring about a revolution in human life.

The truth is that for the attainment of disciplined behaviour, it is essential for one to be convinced of the existence of a power far superior to himself, a Being who is aware of man's activities at every moment; who can reward and punish man, and from whom it is impossible to escape.

There can be only one being of this nature and that is God. Belief in God functions at two levels at the same time. On the one hand, man finds in God a guardian who is aware of all his activities and who has unlimited power to chastise him. It is not possible for man to escape God's chastisement. Belief in God compels man to steadfastly adopt a proper attitude in all situations, privately as well as publicly. Only then can he save himself from the wrath of God.

Another point is that belief in God is a

storehouse of limitless hope. Man can lead his life in this world with the conviction that if he incurs any loss because of treading the path of truth, or if he suffers from any other adversity, he will be able manfully to endure it. For if he adheres to the path of truth, God will grant him a reward in the form of eternal paradise, and there can be no reward greater than this. It is not possible for man on his own to bind himself to moral values or adhere to justice. This is possible only when he is convinced of the fact that he is under a super power—a super power who observes justice to the extent of perfection; for whom it is fully possible to guide man to the true path and also punish those who deviate from this true path. This present, limited world is totally inadequate for punishing a criminal. Similarly, this world is also inadequate for granting great rewards for one's good deeds. The concept of God tells us that God can create a far better world free from all the limitations of the present world, where reward and punishment both can be satisfactorily awarded.

The concept of a living and powerful God is necessarily accompanied by the concept of accountability. And the concept of accountability guarantees right thinking and right actions on the part of man. It makes man cautious by reminding him of God's chastisement. Moreover, this gives him the conviction of receiving God's reward if he adheres to the right path at all costs and in all situations.

The concept of God provides man with an ideology in which loss is turned to gain and in which adversity brings with it good tidings.

Man, Realize the Reality

Just think this over for a few minutes: You are destined for an extremely long and unbroken lifespan. Death is by no means the termination of this life: it is the commencement of a new era. Death is simply the dividing-point between the two stages of our life. Take the farmer's planting of a crop as an example. He invests his capital in it and cultivates it, until such times as the crop

ripens and dries up. Then he harvests it so that he can use the grain and store it up for his year's requirements. Harvest is the end of one phase in the crop's development, during which time planting and cultivation had taken place. Before the cutting of the crop there had been only toil and expense, it is afterwards that he will enjoy the fruits of his efforts.

This is the case with our life also. In this world we are investing in and cultivating our afterworld crop. Each one of us owns a field that is either being cultivated or left barren. We have used a seed that is either productive or mediocre. After sowing our crop, we have either attended to it or neglected it. Either we have cultivated thorns, or else flowers and fruits have blossomed in our garden. We have either expended our energies on the improvement of our crop, or we have wasted our time in unnecessary and irrelevant occupations. The period of preparation of this crop lasts until death. The day of our death is harvest-day. When our eyes close on this world,

they will open on the afterlife, and there, the crop that we have been busy cultivating all our lives will appear before us.

Remember that the person who does the farming is the one who does the harvesting, and he will reap only the crop that he has sown. Likewise in the afterworld, everybody will reap the harvest he had prepared for himself prior to his death. Every farmer knows full well that he will take as much grain to the granary as he has grown, and that the crop can never be other than the one he has sowed. Likewise, in the afterworld, man will be recompensed according to the nature of his efforts in the world. Death is the final announcement of the termination of the time allotted to him for struggle and endeavour, and the afterworld is the final place in which he will be able to experience the results thereof. After death there will be no further opportunity to struggle and it must be borne in mind that the afterlife will never terminate.

What a critical matter this is! If only man could

come to a mature understanding of this before he died. Becoming aware of the truth only after death is too late, because his later realization will be of no avail. There is no time then to consider the gravity of one's errors, no time for repentance and certainly no time for expiations.

Mankind is oblivious of his destiny, while time is pressing him with the utmost speed towards the harvesting of his crop. He is busily engaged in procuring paltry worldly profits, and considers himself worthily occupied, whereas, in fact, he is just frittering away his precious time. He has before him a superb opportunity to ensure a prosperous future for himself, but instead, he chooses to occupy himself with unimportant and trivial things. His Lord is calling him towards Paradise, a place of endless honour and bliss, while he, in his ignorance, is immersed in ephemeral and delusive pleasures. He reckons that he is saving, but in fact he is squandering. While constructing his worldly mansion, he is labouring

under the illusion that he is building for his life: while in fact, he is erecting walls of sand that will crumble away to nothing.

Man! Realize what you are doing and what you ought to be doing.

God Oriented Life

The Earth is the sun's satellite. It constantly orbits around the sun. It takes one year to complete such a rotation. This movement of the earth around the sun is essential for the healthy functioning of life on earth. If the earth did not revolve around the sun, its existence would have no meaning, and life would come to an end.

This is a practical example of how we should lead our lives in this world. This example is indeed a physical demonstration that shows how man must revolve around God, just as the earth revolves around the sun. It means that all of man's activities should be based on God.

The earth rotates as compelled to by the laws

of nature. But man, of his own free will, should surrender to God. He should build a life, which is based on the concept of God. This consciousness is the real ascension of man. In this consciousness lies the secret of all success. A God-oriented life begins with the discovery of God. When individuals, whether men or women, discover God, it means that they have found the truth. And this truth pervades their whole being. This feeling of having discovered the truth becomes such a thrilling experience that it fills them with everlasting conviction. This everlasting conviction removes all frustrations from their lives. Therefore, losses are no longer such, for, in spite of them, they never lose the feeling that their greatest asset, i.e. God, is still with them.

Man experiences this realization by pondering upon God's creations. The present universe is an expression of God's attributes. It is a complete introduction to God. God is visible in His creations, just as clearly as a human being sees his own reflection in the mirror.

The vastness of space tells man that God, its Creator, is boundless. The observation of the sun and the stars shows us that God is all light. The heights of the mountains show us the greatness of God. The waves of the sea and the flow of the river tell us that God is a storehouse of boundless blessings. We see God's bounty in the greenery of the trees. Man's existence becomes a proof of God's existence. In the waft of air he experiences a Divine touch. In the chirping of the birds, he hears God's songs.

For man, a God-oriented life starts by his remembering God. He begins to feel the presence of God. Everything serves to remind him of God. God's remembrance is never absent from his heart and mind. His mornings and evenings are spent as if he is living in God's neighbourhood. Just as rain replenishes the crops, so does he remain ever immersed in the remembrance of God.

God is a spiritual focus for man. One whose heart is attached to God undergoes spiritual experiences at every moment. Belief in God

becomes a source of spiritual development for him. Filled with the love of God, he does not need anything further. God becomes a vast ocean for him to continue to swim in without ever experiencing any limit. In the form of spiritual awakening, he receives such great wealth that he does not feel any need for anything else.

For one who discovers God, the entire universe becomes an open book of God for him. Every leaf of a tree becomes a page of the divine book.

When he sees the sun, he feels as if God is lighting His heavenly torch so that he may read His book clearly. The Universe becomes, as it were, a supernal university and he its student.

Finding God is to find his centre of Love. Man by birth is a seeker of a Supreme Being who is far above him, who is free from all limitations and who may form the centre of his feelings, in short, a Being after finding whom a grown man becomes as satisfied as a child after being held in the arms of his mother. This discovery of God saves one from regarding something other than God as God

and mistakenly and unrealistically thinking it to be the answer to the urge inherent in his nature. The discovery of God is to fulfill his or her real urge to find God. And the failure to discover God means failing to find that which is man's greatest need.

One who fails to find God is compelled by his natural urge to give the place of God to something other than God. This place is sometimes accorded to a certain human being, sometimes to a certain animal, sometimes to a phenomenon of nature, sometimes to a certain material power, sometimes to a certain supposed concept and sometimes just to the self.

Even if one fails to discover God, or he becomes a denier of God, it is not in his or her power to stifle the urge in his nature to find God. That is why those men and women who have not found God inevitably come to hold something other than God as God. And this supposed God is always some creature or the other of God. By nature, it is possible for man not to accept the real God as God, but it is not possible for anyone to save himself

or herself from granting the status of divinity to something other than God. Making God one's object of worship raises man's position. On the contrary, regarding something other than God as God amounts to descending from the level of humanity.

Submission to God is the only way of life for both man and the universe.

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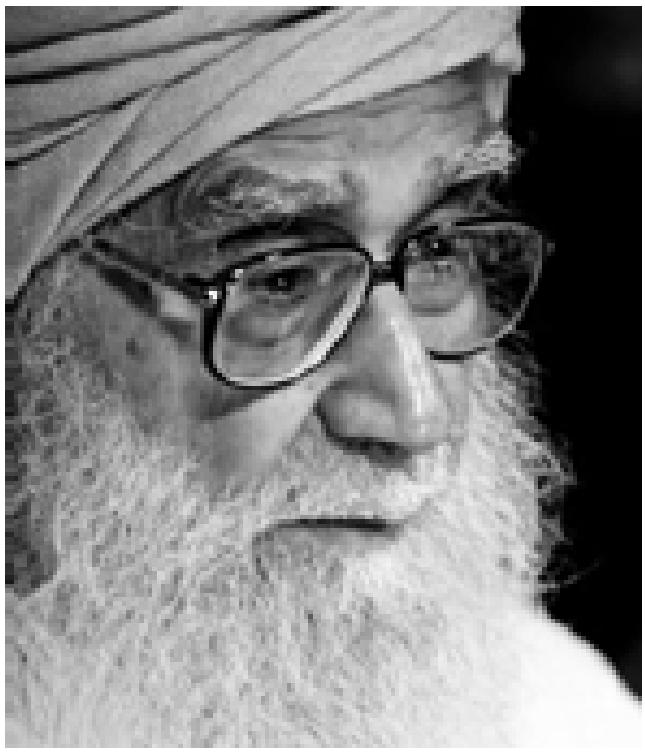

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is an Islamic spiritual scholar who has adopted peace as the mission of his life. Known for his Gandhian views, he considers non-violence as the only method to achieve success. Keeping this ideal consistently before him, he has written over 200 books on Islam and a commentary on the Quran. His most recent publications is *The Prophet of Peace: The Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad* (Penguin Books).

Internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace, he has received, among others, the Demiurgus Peace International Award, the Padma Bhushan, and the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award.

In 2001, he founded CPS International—Centre for Peace and Spirituality. CPS is a non-profit, non-political organization that promotes the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality and undertakes inter-faith dialogue. For questions and queries call us at +91-9999944119, or contact us at info@cpsglobal.org.

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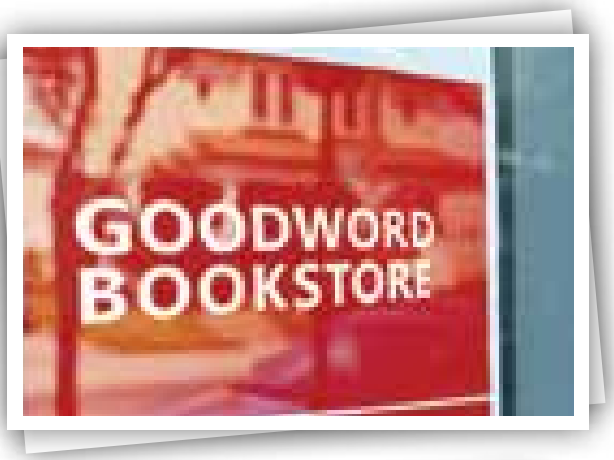

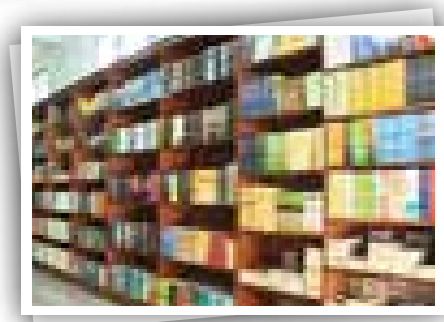

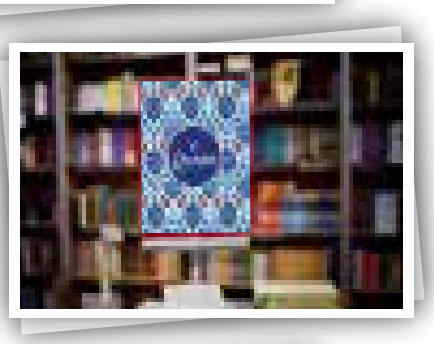

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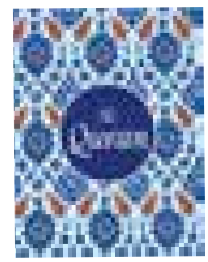

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Man is born with unlimited potential, yet in the present world he finds only a very limited use for it. According to his nature, man wants to live eternally, but very soon, without his leave, death arrives and puts an end to his life. He harbours an ocean of desires in his heart, but these desires are never fulfilled. He houses a life of dreams in his mind, but these dreams are never realized. In this case, there is no difference between a poor man and a rich man. Why are man and the present world so mismatched?

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